

Washington, D.C. — Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07), Member of the Armed Services Committee and a former three-star Admiral, today voted in favor of the Defense Authorization Bill, which provides \$503.8 billion for the Department of Defense and national security programs through the Department of Energy. It also provides \$141.8 billion for ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan for Fiscal Year 2008.

“This bill is vital to strengthening our military,” said Congressman Sestak. “The on-going wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have overstretched our military personnel and equipment. The funding provided in this measure will ensure that our military has the necessary equipment and training to perform their missions.”

Restores Readiness:

Currently, no Active Duty, Reserve, or National Guard units at home are combat ready to deploy to anywhere around the world due to the impact of the Iraq war. To address this problem, this measure dramatically improves troop readiness and ensures that our service members are equipped with the best gear and equipment possible. Specifically, among other things, the bill:

- creates a \$1 billion Strategic Readiness Fund to give the Department of Defense the ability to address equipment shortfalls as rapidly as possible;
- provides \$1 billion in equipment for the National Guard and Reserve, which currently have only 56% of their required equipment;
- fully funds the Army and Marine Corps respective budget requests of \$13.6 and \$8.4 billion to “reset” the equipment that has worn down during the war in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- provides \$250 million to allow additional training time;
- provides \$1.2 billion for personal body armor and \$4.1 billion for Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles, which will reduce the casualties in vehicles from Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks by as much as 80%; and
- establishes a Defense Readiness Production Board to identify critical readiness needs and to quicken the production of military equipment

The Defense Authorization Bill also supports cutting edge technology manufactured in the 7th Congressional District, including the V-22 Osprey aircraft which is made by Boeing in their Ridley Park plant. The new bill authorizes \$1.899 billion for the procurement of 23 Osprey aircraft – an increase of 10 aircraft from the previous year. It also advances the Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) helicopter program, which will be built by Boeing in Delaware County, and invests resources in the research and development of safer, new equipment for our troops, such

as a portable mobile emergency broadband systems to improve communications for our troops on the ground.

Supports Our Troops:

Because we owe so much to the men and women who serve our country, the Defense Authorization Bill also provides resources that take care of our service members and their families by authorizing a 3.5% across-the-board pay raise (.5% above the Administration's proposal) for all service members, which reduces the pay gap between the military and private sector to 3.4%; prohibiting increases in their health TRICARE and pharmacy user fees, which the Administration proposed to do in the midst of a war; and ensuring that our wounded service members receive the best health care possible by providing the people, training and oversight mechanisms needed. It further ensures that our soldiers are receiving adequate medical health care to tackle the growing problem of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder by investing in the Mental Health Initiative and the Traumatic Brain Injury Initiative.

"To maintain a strong national defense, we must take care of the men and women who serve to protect our country," added Congressman Sestak. "This bill not only respects our troops but it also recognizes the immense sacrifices that military families give for our country."

Begins to Transform Our Military:

"Today's bill is an important step – it begins to reverse the significant degradation in readiness in our military from the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Congressman Sestak. "But we must also do more to transform our military. In particular, we must reevaluate the military's roles and missions and move forward with a greater focus on our military capability, not just capacity. We must be able to exploit the great, new capability of Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) and we must also consider steps such as giving the Joint Chiefs staff more budget authority."

Congressman Sestak helped aggressively shape the Defense Authorization Bill to improve the roles and missions of our military, to improve its core competencies and core missions and services. This is the first initial steps needed to transform our military in its space, communications, and readiness.

In preparation for the Defense Authorization bill, Congressman Sestak met with numerous businesses throughout the district. He then worked with them in pursuing those initiatives and ventures that support this transformation, including vital research efforts in equipment technology, bio-terrorism, logistics systems, wireless technologies, interoperability, emergency broadband systems, and other areas that assist our men and women in uniform. Because of these meetings, he was able to relay to the House Armed Services Committee the important work that is being done in his district toward this critical transformation and ultimately was able to secure authorized funding, nearly \$40 million, for all of these industries and research laboratories in the Defense Authorization bill.

For example, Congressman Sestak secured funding for the Distributed Mission Interoperability Toolkit (DMIT), which improves information sharing to support complex missions. He secured funding for the Joint Strike Fighter Authentic Tactical Flight Simulator, which saves the military money, time, and resources by getting pilots in advanced flight simulators for training programs instead of in the air. And he advanced software that is supporting critical medical needs that can manage the entire medical supply chain from the industrial base to the health professionals in the field.

These new technologies will not only create new opportunities for small business in our region, but it will improve our military and transform it for the 21st Century.

Because of the criticality of small businesses and entrepreneurs in the C4ISR areas, Congressman Sestak was also successful in adopting an amendment to the bill that will help transform our military by requiring appropriate market research be conducted by the Department of Defense prior to its awarding contracts over \$1million. This ensures that the Department of Defense is not duplicating efforts and wasting funding, and that it is also improving access to military contracts to small businesses.

During a recent visit to a company located in his District, Congressman Sestak learned of why expanding access to small businesses is an efficient and effective use of our nation's resources, particularly in "new or transformational" requirements of our federal agencies. Gestalt, a small business located in the 7th District, recently completed an Army contract — which they competed for against a very large defense corporation — to fix the Defense Readiness Reporting System.

Right now, the military uses a fairly arcane system, where obtaining detailed, up-to-date instantaneous information on the readiness of our military and its units is challenging at best. What was required was a much more dynamic system that could present in real-time the readiness of our forces...in this case, the 5,000+ Army units we have, which can greatly impact a Commanders' decision in what has become a fast-paced battle space environment where speed of decision is so highly valued.

The large defense corporation said it would take three years to complete the project, while Gestalt then did it in only seven months.

"American small businesses bring innovation, creativity, competition and lower costs to the federal table. When these businesses are excluded from federal opportunities through contract bundling, our agencies, small businesses, and the taxpayers lose," added Congressman Sestak. "Fairer access for small businesses will lead to lower prices and the improvement of the quality of goods and services procured by the federal government, bringing greater returns for taxpayer dollars."

Congressman Sestak has already taken steps to change Defense contracting to improve cost efficiency and benefit small business. He also passed an amendment requiring that, when possible, large contracts are unbundled to open the bidding process to small businesses.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "DeepBlue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives.

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